

ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!



NO. 2
DEC



150
100
CANADA

SHOCK

SUSPENSE STORIES

**THRILLING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
TRADITION!**

GIVE IT
TO HIM,
THE
DIRTY
RED!

YUH DON'T
LIKE IT HERE,
WHY DON'T YUH
GO BACK WHERE
YUH CAME FROM?

STOP IT! PLEASE!
WHAT YOU'RE DOING
IS WRONG!
ACT LIKE
AMERICANS!



BRACE YOURSELF FOR THE SHOCKING FINAL
TWIST TO THIS GRIPPING TALE OF TENSION...

KICKBACK!

A CRIME
SUSPENSORY

IT ALL BEGAN ABOUT A YEAR AFTER I MARRIED OSCAR HEDDER! OSCAR WAS TWICE MY AGE BUT HIS BANK BOOK SHOWED SIX FIGURES SO I MADE A PLAY FOR HIM! FINALLY I GOT HIM TO PROPOSE TO ME AND THEN ACCEPTED GODLY! I DIDN'T LOVE HIM! I WAS ONLY INTERESTED IN SECURITY! THEN IT HAPPENED! AS I SAID, IT WAS ABOUT A YEAR AFTER HE'D BROUGHT ME TO HIS ISOLATED HOUSE! OSCAR HAD A **HEART ATTACK**.

WILL HE BE
ALL RIGHT,
DOCTOR?

CAN'T SAY FOR SURE! SURE!
I'VE DONE ALL I CAN! WE
CAN ONLY WAIT AND SEE!
ACTUALLY HE SHOULD BE IN
A HOSPITAL, BUT I'M AFRAID
THAT MOVING HIM INTO TOWN
OVER THOSE BAD-ROADS MIGHT
KILL HIM!

Jack
Kilmer

OSCAR ALWAYS HAD A BAD HEART! ONE OF THE REASONS I MARRIED HIM WAS THAT I FIGURED HE MIGHT POP OFF ANY MINUTE, AND HIS **GRROW** WOULD BE **WONE!** ALTHOUGH I ACTED ALL UPSET, I SECRETLY **HOPED** HE WOULD BE...



HOW IS HE TODAY, DOCTOR?

BAD NEWS, FREDA! IT'S GOING TO BE PRETTY **TOUGH** ON YOU FROM NOW ON!

THE DOCTOR'S FACE WAS DARK WITH CONCERN! I GOT A LITTLE PANICKY! SOMETHING WAS UP, BUT **WHAT?**

TOUGH? I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

YOUR HUSBAND'S HEART ATTACK HAS LEFT HIM COMPLETELY **PARALYZED, FREDA!** HE HAS ABSOLUTELY **NO CONTROL** OVER HIS **MUSCLES!** HE WILL BE **DEPENDENT** FOR THE **BEST** OF HIS LIFE!



AT FIRST I WAS MERELY **SHOCKED!** BUT AS THE DAYS PASSES, THE FULL REALIZATION OF WHAT OSCAR'S CONDITION REALLY MEANT... AS FAR AS I WAS CONCERNED... **HIT ME.**

HE...HE'S LIKE A...A **BABY!** WE'RE HELPLESS... **ABSOLUTELY HELPLESS!**

OSCAR COULDN'T EVEN **TALK** TO TELL ME WHAT HE WANTED OR NEEDED! ALL HE COULD DO WAS OPEN HIS MOUTH AND CHOKE OUT **GUTTURAL** SOUNDS WHEN HE WANTED ME...

G-H-H-H-H-P-H-H!
U-R-R-R-R-H-H!

JUST A MINUTE, OSCAR!



OSCAR NEVER HAD ANY FRIENDS, AND LIVING IN THAT ISOLATED HOUSE DIDN'T HELP! THERE WERE NO NEIGHBORS FOR MILES! I HAD NO ONE TO TALK TO! I WAS ALONE... **ALONE WITH MY CROOKING, HELPLESS HUSBAND!**

G-H-H-H-H-P-H-H!

I... I'M **SORRY,** OSCAR! I DON'T **UNDERSTAND** YOU!



OSCAR COULD HEAR ME WHEN I SPOKE! IF HE WANTED SOMETHING, I HAD TO RUN DOWN A LIST UNTIL I HIT THE **RIGHT ONE!**

ARE YOU **THIRSTY,** OSCAR?

U-R-R-R-R-H-H!

SLEEPY?

U-R-R-R-R-H-H!

HUNGRY?

G-H-H-H-H-P-H-H!



I COULDN'T LEAVE HIM, NOT EVEN FOR AN HOUR! ONCE A WEEK I RUSHED INTO TOWN TO DO THE SHOPPING! WHEN I'D RETURNED, I'D USUALLY HAVE TO CLEAN UP...

OH, LORD! HOW MUCH CAN I **STAND?**



I WAS HIS FULL-TIME NURSE! I HAD TO WASH FOR...



SHAVE HIM...



FED HIM...

KEEP IT IN YOUR MOUTH! YOU OBLIVIOUS LARDY! LIVING WITH YOU IS JUST LIKE LIVING WITH AN IMBECILE!



IT WENT ON LIKE THAT FOR A YEAR! I THOUGHT I'D GO OUT OF MY MIND...



WHY DON'T YOU DIE, ALREADY? WHY DO YOU GO ON LIVING... DAY AFTER DAY? DIE... DO Y'HEAR? DIE!

W-H-W-H-P-H?

FINALLY I COULDN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER! I'D REACHED THE BREAKING POINT...

I'M GOING OUT! I HAVEN'T BEEN TO A MOVIE SINCE YOU GOT SICK! WELL, I'M GOING TONIGHT!



HE STARED AT ME WITH THOSE WIDE, PLEADING EYES...

YOU'VE BEEN FED! YOU CAN LAST! TELL I GET BACK! GOOD-BYE!



THAT NIGHT I DROVE INTO TOWN AND WENT TO A MOVIE! I FELT A LITTLE BETTER AFTERWARDS! IT DID ME GOOD TO GET AWAY FROM THAT ISOLATED HOUSE! EXCEPT FOR THOSE OCCASIONAL SHOPPING TRIPS, IT'VE BEEN COPIED OF THEM LIKE A *PHOTOCOPIER*...



HOW WERE YOU WHILE I WAS AWAY? ALL RIGHT? WELL, GET USED TO IT, BUSTER! I'M DOWN THIS OFTEN FROM NOW ON!

U-S-A-U-S-A

I LEARNED OVER HIM...TORMENTING HIM...

AN MOTHER ONE NIGHT I'LL GO AWAY AND NOT COME BACK! WHAT'S HAPPEN TO YOU THEN, HUH? YOU'D STARVE! YOU COULDN'T EVEN GET YOURSELF A DRINK OF WATER! YOU'D STARVE TO DEATH!



O-U-S-A-U-S-A!

AND THEN, ON ONE OF THOSE FREQUENT ESCAPES INTO TOWN, I MET NICK! HE WAS *AND* AND HANDSOME...AND I WAS LONELY...

THERE'S A ROAD-HOUSE A COUPLE OF MILES OUT! WE COULD DANCE A LITTLE!

I'M WILLING! LET'S GO, NICK!



I SAW NICK OFTEN! AT FIRST IT WAS JUST FOR LAUGHS...NOT AFTER A FEW DATES, IT GOT SERIOUS...



I LOVE YOU, FREDA! I...I NEED YOU...

OH, NICK? *NEEDS* ME...

AND THEN, ONE NIGHT, I TOLD NICK ALL ABOUT OSCAR! HE WAS ANGRY WITH ME FOR NOT TELLING HIM IN THE BEGINNING...



YOU...YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME YOU WERE MARRIED.

I...I WAS AFRAID TO, NICK! I WAS AFRAID YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO SEE ME IF YOU KNEW!

BUT AFTER A WHILE, HE COOLED OFF...



WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO, BABY? HUH?

I CAN'T DIVORCE HIM, NICK! IT'LL MEAN GIVING UP HIS DOUGH! IF HE WERE TO DIE...IT'D BE MINE EVERY CENT!



BUT I LOVE YOU, FREDA! I WANT TO MARRY YOU!

BE PATIENT, NICK! BE PATIENT! HOW LONG CAN HE GO ON LIVING LIKE THAT?

AND THEN THE DOCTOR TOLD ME HOW LONG...

WHY, YOUR HUSBAND COULD LIVE TO A *RIFE* OLD AGE WITH THE KIND OF WONDERFUL ATTENTION HE GETS FROM YOU!

FREGA?

OH?

SO I MADE UP MY MIND...

WE'VE GOT TO KILL HIM, NEE! IT'S THE ONLY WAY!

NO, FREGA! NOT MURDER!

IT'S BE EASY, DARLING! IT WILL LOOK LIKE AN UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT! I HAVE A PLAN...

ALL RIGHT! LET'S HEAR IT...

THE FOLLOWING DAY, A COUPLE OF MEN CAME TO THE HOUSE...

WE'RE FROM THE AJAX CONSTRUCTION COMPANY!

OH, YES! COME IN!

I TOOK THE WORKMEN DOWN INTO THE CELLAR...

THAT'S RIGHT! I WANT BARS ON EVERY WINDOW! I'M SO AFRAID OF THIEVES, AND MY HUSBAND IS HELPLESS!

GRAY, LADY! WE GOT YUH! O'NONE, FRITZY! LET'S GET TO WORK!

NEXT, I HAD THEM RIP OFF THE OLD CELLAR DOOR AND PUT ON A BIG TRICK ONE...

...AND I'D LIKE YOU TO INSTALL A SNAP-LOCK SO IT WILL LOCK SHUT BY ITSELF!

ANYTHING YOU SAY, LADY!

THEN I HAD THE WORKMAN PUT UP SOME SHELVES IN THE CELLAR...

I WANT TO KEEP SOME CANNED GOODS DOWN HERE!

SOME OF A PANTRY, EH, LADY?

EVERYTHING WAS SET? I STOCKED THE PANTRY IN THE CELLAR WITH CANNED MEATS, VEGETABLES, AND FRUIT JUICES! THEN RICK CAME OVER! OSCAR JUST STARED WITH HIS EXPRESSIONLESS EYES, HIS MOUTH DROOPING...

YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME EMPTY THE CELLAR OF ANY FOODS I MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE TO ESCAPE WITH, RICK!

YEAH! I GET IT, PRICIA!

RICK BUSTED A COUPLE OF CELLAR WINDOWS AND BANGED UP THE BIG THICK DOOR TO MAKE IT LOOK GOOD! MEANWHILE, OSCAR... THE POOR SLOBBERING FOOL... TRIED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON...

THE MAN WHO COMES TO READ THE ELECTRIC METER IN THE CELLAR WILL BE HERE IN THREE WEEKS! WE'LL GET ME OUT!

IF I DON'T HEAR FROM YOU BY THEN, I'LL COME MYSELF!

U-H-OH! U-H-OH!

RICK TOOK ME IN HIS ARMS AND KISSED ME... RIGHT THERE IN FRONT OF PARALYZED, HELPLESS OSCAR! I THOUGHT HIS EYES WOULD POP RIGHT OUT OF HIS HEAD!

SEE YOU, BYE... U-H-OH! RICK! HONEY!

THEN HE WAS GONE! I TURNED TO MY BEDRIDDEN, DROOLING HUSBAND AND SNEEZED...

A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT IS GONNA HAPPEN NOW, OSCAR! I'M GONNA GET LOCKED IN THE CELLAR! AND YOU, YOU'RE GONNA STARVE TO DEATH!

I WENT DOWN INTO THE CELLAR, AND THE GREAT BIG NEW DOOR WITH THE SNAP-LOCK CLICKED SHUT BEHIND ME! I COULD HEAR OSCAR'S FAINT GLUTTERAL CRIES BEYOND IT...

U-H-OH-H-H-H! F-U-U-U-U!

CLICK!

I SETTLED DOWN FOR A LONG STAY! UPSTAIRS, AS THE DAYS PASSED, OSCAR'S SCREE WAILS AND BLOOD-CURDLING YELLS GREW WEAKER AND WEAKER.

FOUR DAYS! FOUR DAYS WITHOUT FOOD OR WATER! HE OUGHT TO BE DEAD BY NOW!

FINALLY OSCAR'S HOWLING STOPPED! SILENCE CLOSED IN! MEANWHILE, I WAS LIVING ON THE CANNED SOGS I'D STORED IN THE CELLAR...

WOH! COLD MEAT! OH, WELL! IT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING!

AFTER THREE WEEKS OF WAITING, GROWING MORE NERVOUS EACH DAY... I HEARD THE DOOR BELL... UPSTAIRS...

ELECTRIC!
ANYBODY HOME?

HELP! HELP!

I SCREAMED AND YELLED! I PUT ON A BIG ACT!
I BAWLED LIKE A BABY WHEN THE METER-READER LET ME OUT...

I'VE BEEN... LOCKED IN.
SOB SOB! MY HUSBAND...
MY HUSBAND...

YOUR HUSBAND IS DEAD, LADY!

THE COPS LISTENED TO MY STORY.

THE DOOR LOCKED
BEHIND ME! I
COULDN'T GET OUT!
I WAS TRAPPED...
TRAPPED!

HOW
COME YOU
HAD THE
WINDOWS
BARRICADED,
LADY?

I WAS AFRAID!
MY HUSBAND WAS
HELPLESS! I WAS
AFRAID OF PHONE-
ERS! I HAD THE
SNAP-LOCK PUT ON
THE DOOR IN CASE
I FORGOT TO
LOCK IT! AND...
SOB...IT...SOB...
LOCKED ME
IN...

TAKE
IT
EASY,
LADY!

I TRIED TO
ESCAPE! I
PELLED AND
SCREAMED
TILL I WAS
HOARSE!
POOF OSCAR!
SOB...POOF
OSCAR! HE
WAS SO...SOB...
SO HELPLESS!

IT WASN'T
POOF
FAULT,
MAM! IT
WAS AN
ACCIDENT!
YOU
COULDN'T
HELP
IT!

THEY FELL FOR IT! THE CASE WAS CLOSED, AND I WAS CLEAR! I CLEANED OUT THE CELLAR, HAD THE BROKEN WINDOWS REPLACED, AND LOCKED IT UP FOR GOOD! I NEVER WANTED TO GO DOWN THERE AGAIN! I KNEW IT WOULD BE A LONG TIME BEFORE I'D FORGET THAT THREE-WEEK ORDEAL... LISTENING TO OSCAR'S FADING CRIES AS HE SLOWLY STARVED TO DEATH! I HIRED A LAWYER TO SETTLE MY HUSBAND'S ESTATE...

SINCE YOUR HUSBAND
LEFT NO WILL, MRS.
WISSONS...

IT WILL BE SEVERAL
MONTHS UNTIL THE PRO-
CEEDS OF HIS ESTATE
CAN BE TURNED OVER TO
YOU!

DO YOUR BEST,
MR. DENISON!

RICK AND I MET EACH OTHER SOON AFTER IT WAS ALL VERY PROPER, AND AROUSED NO SUSPICION.

FREDA HIDING THIS IS RICK LARIBALE!

HOW DO YOU DO, RICK?

GLAD TO MEET YOU, FREDA!

RICK WAS VERY ANXIOUS TO MARRY ME, BUT I CAUTIONED HIM...

WE'VE GOT TO WAFF, RICK! PEOPLE MIGHT TALK!

OHAY, FREDA! ANYTHING YOU SAY!

MEANWHILE, MR. DAVIDSON WAS WORKING ON OSCAR'S ESTATE... TRYING TO SETTLE IT! MONTHS WENT BY! FINALLY, RICK AND I WERE MARRIED! WE STAYED AT THE HOUSE...

I HATE THIS PLACE, RICK! JUST AS SOON AS EVERYTHING'S SETTLED, WE'LL SELL IT!

OHAY WITH ME!

AND THEN I GOT A CALL FROM NEW YORK! MR. DAVIDSON, MY LAWYER, NEEDED ME THERE TO WIND UP THE ESTATE.

I'LL GO WITH YOU, FREDA!

NO, RICK! I DON'T THINK THAT WOULD LOOK RIGHT! I'D BETTER GO ALONE!

I WENT WITHOUT HIM! I WAS GONE ALMOST FOUR DAYS! WHEN I GOT BACK...

RICK? I'M HOME! RICK? RICK?

I FOUND RICK IN THE CELLAR! HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS! HIS FISTS WERE BLOODY AND RAW FROM POUNDING ON THE DOOR! HE MUST HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR THE GRAND BODOS I'D REMOVED, AND THE DOOR HAD LOCKED BEHIND HIM! HE WAS ALMOST DEAD FROM LACK OF FOOD AND WATER...

I NURSED RICK BACK TO HEALTH! BUT SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO HIM WHILE HE WAS IMPRISONED IN THE CELLAR! HIS BOND HAD SNAPPED! HE CAN'T TALK! HE CAN'T MOVE! HE'S PARALYZED! HE JUST LIES THERE... STARVING! HE'S LIKE A HELPLESS BABY! I HAVE TO FEED HIM, WASH HIM...

MY DARLING! MY DARLING!

OHAY! HE'S COMPLETELY OUT OF HIS MIND! A BABBLING IDIOT! OSCAR... AT LEAST... COULD UNDERSTAND ME WHEN I SPOKE...

THE WIND-UP TO THIS SCIENCE-FICTION
YARN SHOULD GIVE YOU QUITE A JOLT...!

GEE, DAD... IT'S A DAISY!

LIEUTENANT STANLEY LINDEN, LEFT-TO-RIGHT OF THE EXPLORATION ROCKET-SHIP *DISCOM-IV*, SEES THE DOLDS CONTAINER HALF-FILLED WITH SOIL THAT RESTED BENEATH THE GLOWING INFANED TUBE? NEAR HIM, LIEUTENANT ARNOLD HARTLY, ROCKET-ENGINEER, BUSIED HIMSELF WITH ANOTHER CONTAINER, THIS ONE FILLED WITH FLOWERS...

WHEN'S THIS, HARTLY? YOU STARTING ANOTHER FLOWER BOX?

THAT'S RIGHT! ANY OLD-FACTIONS, LINDEN?



LIEUTENANT LINDEN MOVED TO LIEUTENANT HARTLY'S SIDE AND WATCHED AS ARNOLD CAREFULLY FINISHED THE FLOWERING PLANT HE HAD CULTIVATED...

BOY? YOU CERTAINLY ARE JODD ON THESE THINGS, HARTLY! WHAT'S THIS ONE CALLED?

DON'T TOUCH! THAT'S A SHARPS DASH! LOOK, STAN! I'VE TOLD YOU OVER AND OVER! *DON'T TOUCH THE FLOWERS!*



A SCIENCE-FICTION SUSPENSORY

LIEUTENANT LINDEN UNWRAPPED AND MOVED DOWN THE CREW'S QUARTERS TO A SMALL GROUP OF OFFICERS GATHERED AROUND A CARD TABLE.



DEAL ME IN, SERVAL!
SURE THING, STAR!
HEY! I HEARD HANTLY FLAPPING AT YOU! WHY DON'T YOU LAY OFF?

AW, HE'S NOTS!
ALWAYS PUTTERING AROUND THOSE FLOWERS!

SEE, A GUY'S ENTITLED TO *SOME* HOBBY! SO FLOWERS'RE NOT!

YEAH... BUT DOES HE HAVE TO FELL EVERY TIME YOU GO NEAR THEM?

HEY, FELLERS! I GOT AN IDEA! THIS GUYNT TO GET *HANTY-BOY* PRETTY REED! LISTEN...



LIEUTENANT HANTLY TURNED FROM WATERING HIS TINY GARDEN, AS THE VOICES AT THE CARD TABLE ROSE...



AW, HOW DO YOU *ADORE* STARD? SHE'S PROBABLY FORGOTTEN YOU!
NOT THIS BASS! SHE WAS CRAZY ABOUT ME!
WAS IS RIGHT! SHE WAS NINE MONTHS IS A LONG TIME TO BE GONE!
SHE'S PROBABLY COOLED OFF BY NOW!

LIEUTENANT LINDEN GOT TO HIS FEET ANGRILY...



OH, YEAH! I'LL GET SHE *STILL* LOVES ME!
I'LL GET SHE *DON'T*!
YEAH! HE TOO! GO AHEAD! *PROVE IT!*

LIEUTENANT LINDEN DARTED ACROSS THE CREW'S QUARTERS TOWARD LIEUTENANT HANTLY...



DEAR! I'LL *PROVE* IT! YOU JUST SIT THERE!
HUMP! WAIT! *DON'T*!

LIEUTENANT LINDEN TORE THE SHAGGY DAISY FROM LIEUTENANT HANTLY'S FLOWER BOX AS THE OTHERS COVERED THEIR MOUTHS TO KEEP FROM LAUGHING...



SHE LOVES ME... SHE LOVES ME *NOT*.
STOP IT! STOP IT! *FOR'RE HANTLYS IT!*

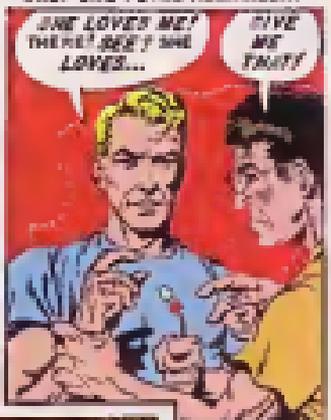
STANLEY LINDEN DANCED ABOUT THE CREW'S QUARTERS PLUCKING THE PETALS FROM THE DAISSY AS ANGELS HARTLY STUMBLER AFTER HIM... SHOUTING AT HIM...



SHE LOVES ME!
SHE LOVES ME
NOT!

STOP IT!
YOU GIBB
HEARTLESS
BULLY!

FINALLY LIEUTENANT LINDEN HELD UP THE PLUCKED FLOWER... ONLY ONE PETAL REMAINED...



SHE LOVES ME?
THERE'S ONE? SHE
LOVES...

GIVE
ME
THAT!

LIEUTENANT HARTLY SWITCHED THE MANGLED FLOWER FROM HIS STATION-OMY'S HAND AND CLIPPED IT TENDERLY TO HIS SLAVE WHERE HE PLACED IT IN A GLASS OF WATER...



WHY'D YOU
DO THAT FOR,
STAN? YOU'RE
JUST A TORMENT
BULLY!

YOU WANT THE
FOOT LIL' THING?

LIEUTENANT HARTLY SPUN AROUND RED-FACED! HE GLARED AT HIS GUNNING MEEKERS...



GO AHEAD! LAUGH! MAKE FUN!
THAT'S THE WAY I FEEL! FLOWERS
AND PLANTS ARE ALIVE! JUST
BECAUSE THEY DON'T OFF OUT
DOESN'T MEAN THEY DON'T FEEL
PAIN!

W-OW
O' HARTLY!

ATTENTION,
ALL HANDS!



IT'S THE SH-IT
OLD
MAN!

REPORT TO YOUR STATIONS!
WE ARE APPROACHING OUR
DESTINATION! SYNCHRONIZE
WATCHES! TIME NOW... 0145!
LANDING TIME... 000!



THIS IS
IT,
FELLOWS!

HEY, HARTLY! IF YOU
CAN FEAR YOURSELF
AWAY FROM YOUR
FANNED TO LAND
THIS HEAP...

SHUT UP,
LONDON!
ONE MORE
ORDEE AND
I'LL...



C'MON, YOU TWO!
GET IT! WE'VE
GOT WORK TO DO!

LET'S GO!

NEXT STOP...
ALIEN PLANET!

AT 0338 EARTH TIME, THE ORION-W CAME TO REST ON THE SURFACE OF THE PLANET THAT HAD REQUIRED NINE MONTHS OF HURLING ACROSS THE VOID OF SPACE AT TEN TIMES THE SPEED OF LIGHT TO REACH...



OUTSIDE TEMPERATURE... SEVENTY-SIX DEGREES FAHRENHEIT!

OXYGEN CONTENT OF ATMOSPHERE SUFFICIENT! NO NEED FOR SPACE-SUITS!

AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE, WHICH WHEN PROPERLY SET COULD TRANSLATE ALIEN THOUGHTS AND SPEECH INTO ENGLISH, WAS CALIBRATED BY THE YEAH GIP.

SOON A FORT IN THE SIDE OF THE GIANT STEEL MONSTER OPENED AND A LADDER UNFURLED! ONE BY ONE, THE SPACE-EXPLORERS DESCENDED!



ANY SIGN OF LIFE, COMMANDER?

I THOUGHT I SAW SOME SMALL ANIMALS MOVING ABOUT AT THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING!

THE ORION-W HAD LANDED IN AN OPEN FIELD SURROUNDED BY A THICK WALL OF STRANGE VEGETATION...



YOU'RE RIGHT, SIR! LOOK! THERE'S ONE OF THE CREATURES NOW!

DICKSON! SET THE AUTOMATIC FRASCA FOR DOWN HERE! LET'S SEE IF THOSE THINGS ARE INTELLIGENT!



SETTING ANY SIGNALS, DICKSON?

NOTHING, SIR! LOOKS LIKE THOSE THINGS ARE NON-COMMUNICATIVE!

BY THE TIME THE SPACE-TRAVELERS HAD SET UP THEIR PLASTO-TENTS, DARKNESS HAD CRISP ACROSS THE ALIEN PLANET'S SKY! IT WAS TOO LATE TO DO ANY EXPLORING, SO...

THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR WAS ADJUSTED AND READJUSTED WITH NO RESULTS! FINALLY...



OKAY, DICKSON! FORGET IT! PERHAPS WE'LL FIND AN INTELLIGENT FORM OF ANIMAL LIFE WHEN WE BEGIN OUR EXPLORING! NOW, LET'S SET UP A CAMP!

HOT DAM! WE SLEEP IN THE OPEN TOMORRY! THAT'S A WELCOME CHANGE FROM BEING COOPED UP IN THE SHIP!



WHAT SAY WE ALL TURN IN AND GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP? WE'LL START OUT BRIGHT AND EARLY IN THE MORNING!

GOOD IDEA! I'M POOPED!

WE, TOO!

BUT AS MORNING DAWNED OVER THE STRANGE TERRAIN...



COMMANDER? COMMANDER? WHAT'S UP, SIR?

HUH? WHAT?

IT'S SERIAL! HE'S GONE! DISAPPEARED!

COMMANDER MORRIS, OFFICER-IN-CHARGE OF THE CREW-W, CAME OUT OF HIS PLASTO-TEXT AND LOOKED AROUND AT THE FACES OF HIS MEN, NOW PALED WITH FEAR...

WHAT HAPPENED?
SEGAL WAS ON THE GEAR WATCH, WASN'T HE?
HE'S GONE!
I... I THOUGHT I HEARD A SCREAM LAST NIGHT!



PERHAPS HE WANDERED OFF? LET'S LOOK FOR HIM!

ALL RIGHT! HURRY! YOU STAY HERE AND ESCORT THE SHIP LINDEN! YOU TOOK THE BEST COME WITH ME!



AS THE SEARCH PARTY STARTED OFF TOWARD THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING, HARTLY GASPED...

LIEUTENANT HARTLY'S VOICE...

SUDDENLY THE SEARCHING PARTY STOPPED AT THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING! THEY WERE STUDYING SOMETHING ON THE GROUND...

S'MATTER, ARNOLD? SEE A FLOWER?

WERE YOU THINK THE CLEARING LOOKS SMALLER TODAY STAMP?

SO ONE YOU'RE AUTO? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME, WAGBETH... THAT THE TREES ARE MOVING AWAY?

I COULD SWEAR THE FOLIAGE WAS FURTHER AWAY YESTERDAY!

HEY! LOOK! THEY PUSHED SEGAL!

C'MON!



HARTLY AND LINDEN SPURTED ACROSS THE OPEN FIELD TOWARD WHERE THE SEARCH PARTY HAD STOPPED! SEGAL... OR WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIM... LAY BEFORE THEM...

THEY BURIED LIEUTENANT SEGAL'S REMAINS AND RETURNED TO CAMP! THAT NIGHT, DOUBLE GUARDS WERE POSTED! THEN, TOWARD MORNING, LIEUTENANT HARTLY WAS AWAKENED BY A CRACKLING SOUND...

IT'S AS IF HE WERE BURIED TO A CRACK!

SOMETHING SEEMS TO HAVE SUCKED EVERY DROP OF LIQUID FROM HIS BODY!

I... I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD!



LINDEN! LISTEN! HEAR THAT?

WHY WOULD HEY? SOUNDS LIKE BEEPING! I KNOW THE AUTO-MATIC TRANSLATORY!



LEUTENANT LINDEN LEAPED OFF HIS AIR-COAT AND OPENED THE FLAP OF HIS PLASTO-TENT! OUTSIDE IT WAS PITCH BLACK! SUD-DENLY, THE DARKNESS WAS KNIFE-D BY TWO EAR-SPLITTING SCREECHERS...



THE NIGHT WAS FILLED WITH A THRASHING AND RUSTLING! LEUTENANT LINDEN SHOUTED TO LEUTENANT HARTLY...



THE YELLOW-ARMED BEAM OF THE SODDAM LAMP PUNCHED THROUGH THE INKY BLACKNESS SURROUNDING THE CAMP! NOTHING COULD BE SEEN! THE CLEARING WAS BARE...



LINDEN AND HARTLY AND COMMANDER MORRIS STARED AT EACH OTHER, THEIR FACES GHOSTLY IN THE SODDAM LAMP'S GOLD LIGHT...



THE CRACKLING STATIC STARTED AGAIN...



HARTLY HEAVY OVER THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR EFFERING GALS...FLICKING SWITCHES! SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A FAINT RUSTLING BEYOND THE CAMP, IN THE DARKNESS! A SHAPE-LIKE FORM REACHED INTO THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT CAST BY THE SODDAM LAMP AND WRAPPED ITSELF AROUND SODDAM-...SODDAM-...LIT!



HARTLY AND LINDEN WATCHED, HORRIFIED, AS THE COMMANDER WAS DRAGGED TO THE BASE OF THE STRANGE FOLIAGE THAT HAD CLOSED IN ON THE CLEARING...

THE SHIP'S CAPTAIN WAS SWALLOWED UP IN THE POD-LIKE STRUCTURE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE ALIEN PLANT! LATER, HIS DRIED AND SHRIVELED BODY WAS DISCOVERED...

HARTLY AND LINDEN STARTED FOR THE SHIP? IN HIS HASTE, LINDEN STUMBLED OVER THE AUTOMATIC TRANSLATOR.

THE TREES! THEIR ROOTS... INTELLIGENT ANIMAL-EATING PLANTS!

NOW HORRIBLE! WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM HERE!

LET'S GO! MAKE A RUN FOR THE SHIP! RIGHT BEHIND YOU... GO'S!



THE MACHINE TOPPLED OVER AND LINDEN WENT SPRAWLING! THE CHADLINS STATIC WAS OUT SHORT, AND SHRIIL HIGH-PITCHED VOICES RASPED FROM THE ELECTRONIC TRANSLATOR...

LIEUTENANT LINDEN STRUGGLED TO HIS FEET AND STUMBLED FORWARD! CURILING THROBING ROOTS SHOT OUT FROM THE FOLIAGE BEHIND HIM, ENROULING HIS LEGS... HIS ARMS...



LIEUTENANT HARTLY STARTED TOWARD HIS TRAPPED FELLOW SPACE-EXPLORER... THEN STOPPED! HE WATCHED IN HORROR AS LIEUTENANT LINDEN WAS LIFTED HIGH INTO THE AIR BY THE SWIRLING, CLUTCHING-ROOT-VINES...

HARTLY TURNED HIS HEAD AND COVERED HIS EYES TO HIDE THE GORY SIGHT, BUT LIEUTENANT LINDEN'S HYSTERICAL, BLOOD-CURLING SHRIERS CONTINUED AS THE VINE-ROOTS TORE HIS ARMS AND LEGS FROM HIS BODY, ONE BY ONE! THE SHRIIL VOICE FROM THE ELECTRONIC TRANSLATOR WAS QUITE AUDIBLE...



GOOD LORD! THE TREES ARE TEARING HIM APART!

THE... LOVES... ME? SHE LOVES... ME... NOT? SHE LOVES... ME! SHE... THE END



TIME TO KILL!

Charlie Small sneered as he looked at the small vial of fluid in his hand. It contained enough sensitized nitroglycerine to blast his tiny apartment to kingdom-come! With his wife in it, of course!

This little bottle was going to end 6 years of living death, Charlie thought . . . 6 interminable years of nagging and being treated like a kid who was barely able to take care of himself.

"Charr-LEEEE! Stop daydreaming over your packing or you'll miss that 7 o'clock bus!" Edna's screeching startled him and he almost dropped the vial. "I'm ironing your last shirt now, Charlie. It'll be ready in a minute!"

He had to act fast now . . . time was running out! Reaching for the alarm clock ticking away on his night-table, he unscrewed the back and removed the alarm bell, exposing the clapper. Then, with infinite care, he set the deadly vial next to it and replaced the backplate.

His hands trembled as he set the alarm for 7. All at once he was conscious of a knot of anticipation tightening in his throat. When that alarm went off, Charlie mused, he would have committed the perfect murder!

"Hurry up, Charlie! You're as slow and disorganized as ever!" Edna

dashed into the bedroom with his shirt. "Put your tie on," she said in exasperation. "I'll finish your packing!"

Charlie hummed to himself as he adjusted his tie in front of the bathroom mirror. Another day with this insufferable shrew and he'd probably go mad!

Edna had his valise ready for him when he walked back into the kitchen. "It's 6:30 already!" Edna whined. "You'll be late as usual! Don't forget your valise! And make sure you have the tickets . . ."

Brushing his lips against her cheek, Charlie smiled. This is the last time I'll ever see you alive, Edna, he thought.

Once outside, Charlie walked up the street . . . then crossed and ducked into a nearby hallway. Dropping his valise, he looked back at the light in his apartment. His wristwatch showed 6:50 . . . the fatal alarm was set to go off in 10 minutes! Just 600 seconds more and the scrupulously careful housewife he hated would be blown to bits!

Unconsciously, Charlie counted off the last minute, second-by-second! 10 seconds left, he gloated . . . 8 . . . 5 . . .! In delicious anticipation of his new freedom, he patted the valise beside him in the doorway. The valise into which hated, hen-pecking Edna . . . careful and precise housewife that she was . . . had thoughtfully packed the alarm-clock from Charlie Small's night-table, at the last minute before his departure!

HIDING PLACE

The ease with which Mike Kleart opened the display case was almost enough to make him laugh aloud. This was the way a job *should* go off—case a job adequately, Mike used to tell his intimates, and the actual lifting itself is a lead-pipe cinch. That held true whether it was a kid you were snatching for ransom from some rich geezer's mansion... or priceless gems like these ancient Inca Crown Jewels he had just slipped into the secret pocket of his jacket lining!

According to the newspaper articles which attracted Mike in the first place, the jewels were worth a cool quarter-million! Not a bad day's work, he thought to himself. Now all he had to do was walk casually through the mob of customers being steered around the Museum by the old guides, and he was free and clear.

Not a cop in sight, Mike exhaled as he moved through the Aztec Room... past the vast Mayan Hall... into the chamber which housed the European Torture Devices. Nothing to stop him from sauntering out of the joint, free as a bird...

The weird siren wailing someplace down the hall made him stop in his tracks. A rasping voice echoed down the corridors: "Someone's cracked the Inca Gem Case... the Crown Jewels are missing! Alert the police at the front gates... nobody leaves the building without being searched!"

Mike could hear the sound of heavy footsteps lumbering up the stairs which led to the Museum entrance. That way was cut off! He whirled and started back through the Renaissance Torture Room: footsteps were hurrying toward him from that direction, too! The joint was sealed up tight! His best bet was to

find a snug hiding place! Laying low until the joint closed, he'd stand a good chance of getting away after dark. Of course he *could* just dump the jewels and scam... but it was totally inconceivable that Mike Kleart should abandon the fabulously valuable loot after he had gotten his hands on it!

Footsteps were approaching now along the corridor, probably the cops making a room-by-room search! He turned frantically... at the far side was a metal suit like one of those uniforms he had once seen in a book about some old yegg named King Arthur. It was on the slumpy side, but with a little squeezing Mike could make it!

He squirmed into the suit with just seconds to spare. For the voices were coming right up to his hiding place. Carefully he drew his gun, hardly able to breathe so cramped was he for space. The first guy to step up to him would get a bellyful of lead, Mike vowed grimly.

A voice outside was speaking: "This suit of Mail," it was saying, "is a splendid example of the Metal Renaissance Torture Chamber. By turning this handle I release dozens of razor-sharp spikes... each 6 inches long... which line the inside of the suit from head to foot. They slide inward toward the center with deadly effect!"

Mike gasped just once as the long slivers of metal moved rapidly toward him from all sides. He tried to scream, but the sound was choked off into a death rattle as a long spike drove through his throat. Others were knifing through his face, his arms, his chest...

"A man imprisoned in this fiendish device," the voice droned on, "would be utterly unrecognizable after just one turn of the handle!"

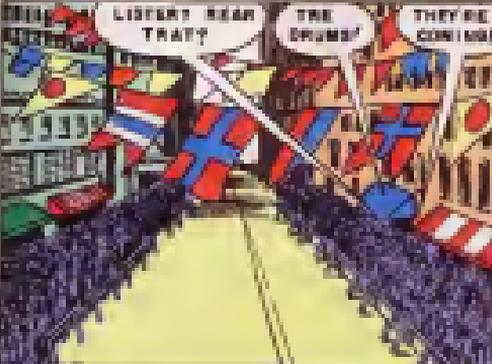
HERE IS AN ELECTRIFYING STORY WITH SOLID IMPACT
IN ITS STARTLING CONCLUSION!

THE PATRIOTS!



**A SHOCK
SUSPENSE STORY**

AN AIR OF EXPECTANCY BLANKETED THE MURMURING CROWD THAT ALREADY HAD BEGUN TO LINE THE SIDEWALKS! A FAINT BRIDGE STIRRED OVERHEAD, RIPPLING THE BUNTING THAT HUNG FROM WIRES STRUNG TAUT ACROSS THE TOWN'S MAIN STREET...



LAUGHING CHILDREN SCAMPERED DOWN THE SPOTLESS STREET SHOUTING AND YELLING...



FROM FAR OFF, THE FAINT BOOM-BOOM OF A BASE DRUM DRIFTED THROUGH THE WARM SPRING AIR! ALL EYES WERE TURNED...FACING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SOUND...WAITING...STRAINING TO SEE...

HARDEST TURN-OUT THE TOWN'S EVER SEEN!

THOSE GUYS DESERVE IT! ROMEO HAS NO FROWN!



A TOWN YOUNG WOMAN TURNED TO HER HUSBAND WHO STOOD AT THE CURB-EDGE TENSE HER.

I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS THE PARADE IS OVER, DEAR!

WHY DON'T YOU GO SHOP, HONEY?



THE SHOP'S WILL BE EMPTY! EVERY-ONE WILL BE WATCHING! IT'S A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOME SHOPPING!

ALL RIGHT, HONEY! I'LL WAIT RIGHT HERE TILL YOU GET BACK!



THE YOUNG WOMAN LEFT HER HUSBAND STANDING AT THE CURB AND ELBOWED HER WAY THROUGH THE CROWD...

EXCUSE ME...PARDON ME...EXCUSE ME...PLEASE!

SWAFFER, LADY... DON'THAR LOVE PARADES?



A ROAR WENT UP FROM THE CROWD! WAY UP THE MAIN STREET, SURLIGHT GLINTED ON SOMETHING SHINY! BRASSY MUSIC BOOMED OVER THE THROAT, RESOUNDING OFF THE BUILDINGS.

HERE COMES THE BAND!

THERE'S A DRUM MAJOR UP IN FRONT!

LOOKIT IN THERE! THAT'S ROMEO!



THE STEADY BOOM-BOOM OF THE BASE DRUM WAS GROWING LOUDER NOW! THE MAN ON THE CURB WHOSE WIFE HAD LEFT HIM TO GO SHOPPING, SCOWLED...

LISTEN TO THEM FROM THE!

BOY, I LOVE BAND MUSIC!

HEY! GET A LOAD OF THAT SCOWLER!



THE DRUM MAJOR PASSED IN FRONT OF THE SCOWLING GENTLEMAN...HIS CHROMIUM BATON SPINNING! BEHIND HIM, THE BLARING BAND FOLLOWED... THEIR DRESS-LEGGINGS MOVING IN UNISON...

IF HE DON'T LIKE PARADES, WHAD HE COME FOR?

SH--SH! HE'LL HEAR YOU!

HEY! LOOK! A GENERAL!



THE GENERAL, RECKONED WITH RIBBONS, MARCHED IN THE CENTER OF THE STREET... WELL, IN BACK OF THE BAND! DIRECTLY BEHIND HIM, A COLUMN OF SPARTANMEN IN CLASS-A UNIFORMS FOLLOWED! THE MAR ON THE CURB'S SCOWL, TURNED TO A SMILE.



LOOK! THEY'RE CARRYING GUNS...
...WITH *S&W* PISTOLS!
NOY, SO NATE TO GET ONE OF *THEM* IS MY SUITS!
HEY! TAKE A LOOK AT THE CHARACTER *NOY!*



WHY, I OUGHT TO...
TAKE IT EASY, CHARLIE!
LOOK NOW THEY KEEP IN STEP! DON'T IT LOOK NICE?

NEXT CAME ANOTHER COLUMN OF SOLDIERS! THESE CARRIED NO BARS...



THEY'RE THE GUYS WHAT GOT THE PURPLE HEART!
ALL THEM THAT'S WOUNDED?
YEAH! USHT!

THE SMILE OF THE MAR ON THE CURB TURRED TO A GREEK...



WHAT MAP FERS TO THESE GUYS NOW?
THEY'RE ALL GETTIN' PURLOINED!
CHARLIE, HE'S SWEDEN NOW!
YEAH, HE'S SWEDEN NOW!

LOOK AT HIS *NOSE!* HE MUST BE A FORGEMAN!



YEAH! HIS SKIN'S KINDA DARK, TOO! AN' HIS HAIR...

UP THE STREET, RATS WERE COMING OFF! BARE HEADS WERE GARBEAIED BY THE GENTLE SPRING BRIZZES! THE GOLD-GUARD APPROACHING...

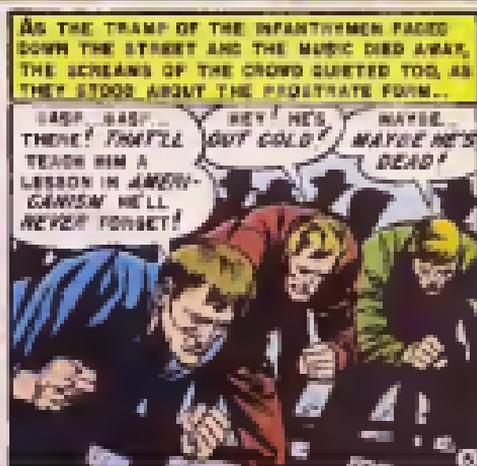


IF HE DON'T *LAYS* IT HERE, WHY IN BLAZES DON'T HE GO BACK WHERE HE CAME FROM?
CUT IT! HERE COMES THE FLAG!

THE FLAG RIPPLED! ITS CRIMSON AND WHITE STRIPES ROLLED OVER AND OVER! THE BLUE FIELD AND WHITE STARS SPARKLED IN THE SUN-LIGHT! ALL HEADS WERE BARE AS IT PASSED! ALL HEADS *DOT DNT*



HEY! LOOK!
WHY, THE DINTY...



THE SOUND OF MUSIC WAS SOMEHOW! THE BUNTING HUNG LIMP AND STILL! THE BRIDGE HAD DIED? SUDDENLY THE CLATTER OF A WOMAN'S HEELS ECHOED THROUGH THE THICK SILENCE.



A SCREAM RANGED INTO THE GATHERING TWILIGHT! THE YOUNG WOMAN FELL ACROSS THE DEAD MAN'S CHEST, SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY.



THE YOUNG WOMAN TURNED HER TEAR-STAINED FACE UPWARD, STARING AT THE GRIM MOB GATHERED AROUND HER.



THE YOUNG WOMAN'S BODY SHOOK AS SHE WHISPERED! THEY COULDN'T TELL IF SHE WAS LAUGHING OR CRYING.



FOR... SHEER, STARK HORROR, READ THIS TERRIFYING TALE...
GUARANTEED TO JAR YOU OUT OF YOUR SEAT!

HALLOWEEN!



**A HORROR
SUSPENSE STORY**

I FIRST CAME TO BRIARWOOD ORPHAN ASYLUM
LAST SUMMER IN ANSWER TO A NEWSPAPER AD
MR. CRITCHT HAD PLACED! ERAN CRITCHT WAS
MASTER OF BRIARWOOD! HE WAS SEARCHING FOR
A NURSE TO HELP HIM IN HIS TASK OF LOOKING
AFTER THE ORPHAN CHILDREN, AND I WAS SORELY
IN NEED OF A JOB.



MY NAME IS ANN DENNIS!
I SAW YOUR AD...

COME IN,
MISS
DENNIS!
SIT DOWN!

MR. CRITCHT'S OFFICE WAS A SIMPLY FUR-
NISHED ROOM IN ONE WING OF THE RUN-DOWN BUILD-
ING THAT SERVED AS THE ORPHAN HOME! I SAT
DOWN DINGEROY ON THE THREADBARE, WELL-WORN
CHAIR HE'D OFFERED ME AND LOOKED AROUND!
DUST COVERED EVERYTHING! THE WINDOWS AND
FLOORS WERE FILTHY AND NEEDED A THOROUGH
WASHING BADLY!



I... I'VE BEEN TERRIBLY
SHORT OF HELP, MRS.
DENNIS!

I DIDN'T MEAN TO
START, MR.
CRITCHT!

LEARN CRITCHIT WAS FAT AND POMPUS! HIS FLABBY JOWLS SAGGED OVER HIS WRINKLED SHIRT COLLAR, AND BEADS OF PERSPIRATION COVERED HIS DUAL COURTEAGE.

YOUR JOB WILL BE A SIMPLE ONE, MISS DENNIS! OVERSEER THE CHILDREN WILL BE YOUR MAIN DUTY!



HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE THERE, MR. CRITCHIT?



THIRTY-FOUR! THEY RANGE IN AGE FROM FOUR TO FOURTEEN! ADD TO THAT SEVEN THAT THEY ARE WELL-BEHAVED... AND SEVERELY DISCIPLINED WHEN BAD... YOUR PRIME CONCERNS WILL BE IN SUPPLYING THEM WITH AN ADEQUATE EDUCATION! YOU WILL RECEIVE BOARD AND LODGING AND SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS A MONTH! WILL YOU TAKE THE JOB?



ALTHOUGH THE SALARY WAS VERY LOW, I WAS FORCED TO ACCEPT THE POSITION! SINCE I'D BEEN OUT OF WORK FOR SOME TIME, MY SAVINGS HAD DISAPPEARED! BESIDES... I LIKED CHILDREN.

I'LL TAKE THE JOB, MR. CRITCHIT!



GOOD! I'LL SHOW YOU YOUR ROOM!

MR. CRITCHIT LED ME DOWN A DARK DIRTY HALL TO A DOOR MARKED "PRIVATE"! HE TURNED THE KNOB AND THE DOOR SQUEAKED OPEN ON RUSTY HINGES! INSIDE, A TARNISHED IRON BED STOOD AGAINST ONE WALL! A PAINT-PEELED WOODEN DRESSER STOOD OPPOSITE! ASIDE FROM THESE AND A PLAIN WOODEN CHAIR, THERE WERE NO OTHER FURNISHINGS.

I... I WOULD LIKE A LAMP, MR. CRITCHIT! I READ AT NIGHT!



ELECTRICITY COSTS MONEY, MISS DENNIS! I'LL BRING YOU SOME CANDLES, BUT THEY'LL HAVE TO COME OUT OF YOUR PAY!



I HAD A SUDDEN URGE TO LEAVE! THEN, FROM ACROSS THE COURT BEYOND THE DIRTY CRACKED WINDOW OF MY ROOM, I HEARD THE HEART-BREAKING SOB OF A CHILD CRYING.

I... I SEE! ALL RIGHT! IF YOU'LL GET THEM FOR ME!



CERTAINLY! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK! OH! ONE MORE THING, MISS DENNIS!



MR. CRITCHIT'S FACE WAS STERN... HIS EYES BURNING...

YES, MR. CRITCHIT?



THE CHILDREN ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, MISS DENNIS! THE BUSINESS OF ROOMING BIRNWOOD IS MINE! YOU WILL DO WELL TO INTEREST YOURSELF ONLY WITH WHAT CONCERNS ROOM!



THEN HE WAS GONE! I STARTED TO UNPACK! MEANWHILE, THE CHILD ACROSS THE COURT CONTINUED TO CRY! A LITTLE LATER, MR. CRITCHIT RETURNED WITH A FEW CANDLES, AND I LIT ONE! ITS CHEERY GLOW PUSHED BACK THE BATHING BLOOD! FINALLY, I COULD STAND IT NO LONGER...

THAT POOR CHILD HAS BEEN CRYING FOR OVER AN HOUR! I'VE GOT TO SEE WHAT'S AROUND!



I PICKED UP THE CANDLE AND WENT OUT OF MY ROOM! I MADE MY WAY DOWN THE DARK MUSTY CORRIDOR UNTIL I CAME TO A DOOR MARKED "DORMITORY"! THE MUFFLED VOICES CAME FROM WITHIN! I TURNED THE KNOB! THE DOOR WOULD NOT OPEN...



It...it's locked!

BOO...BOO...BOO...

A KEY HUNG ON A HOOK IN THE DOOR JAMB! I REMOVED IT AND INSERTED IT IN THE LOCK! THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN! THE CANDLELIGHT KNIFE INTO THE DARKNESS...



GOOD NIGHT!

IT WAS HORRIBLE! THIRTY-FOUR FILTHY BEDS LINED THE ROOM, BATHS TO MATTRESS! GAUNT FACES PEERED AT ME WITH WIDE FRIGHTENED EYES! THE CHILD THAT WAS CRYING WRITHED ON A BED AT THE FAR END OF THE ROOM! I MOVED DOWN THE LITTERED AISLE TOWARD IT...



WHELP!

A NEW MATRON!

MAYBE THIS ONE WON'T BEAT US!

SHE LOOKS NICE!

THAT DON'T SEEM NOTHING!

WH...WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

I IGNORED THEIR REMARKS IN MY CONCERN OVER THE SORROWING CHILD! IT WAS A YOUNG GIRL...SIX OR SEVEN! WHEN I PLACED MY HAND ON HER SHOULDER TO COMFORT HER, SHE SCREAMED...



I...I WON'T HURT YOU, DEAR!

GO...GO AWAY! LEAVE ME ALONE!



WHAT IS IT CHILD? WHAT HURTS YOU?

IT'S HER STOMACH LADY! SHE CRIES LIKE THAT AFTER EVERY MEAL!



DID YOU EAT TOO MUCH, HONEY?

THAT'S A LAUGH! I'VE EAT TOO MUCH! WE DON'T GET HABBLY ANYTHING TO EAT!



SOMEONE'S ALWAYS GETTING SICK FROM THE FOOD!

WE MOTHER GET ANY SICK!

THE GREAT ALWAYS SMELLS FURRY!

I LOOKED AROUND AT THE PALE SUNBURN FACES BEFORE ME! THEY WERE THE BALLOW FACES OF UNDERNOURISHED CHILDREN...TRIM AND WHITE FROM WANT OF GOOD FOOD! THEIR BELLIES WERE BLOATED...THEIR ARMS AND LEGS LIKE STICKS! I COMFORTED THE SICK CHILD...TALKED TO THE OTHERS.

MY NAME IS MISS DENNIS! I'M GOING TO SEE THAT YOU'LL BE WELL TAKEN CARE OF FROM NOW ON!

EMBARRASSED WHAT THE LAST LADY SAID WHEN SHE FIRST CAME! SHE TURNED OUT TO BE JUST LIKE MAM!



I TOLD YOU, MISS DENNIS! ROOM-AND-BREAKFAST IS MY BUSINESS! THE CHILDREN ARE YOURS!

WHEN A CHILD DIES HALF THE NIGHT FROM HUNGER, THEN FEEDING THEM BECOMES MY BUSINESS, MR. CRITCHIT!



I DO THE BEST I CAN, MISS DENNIS! I'M ALLOWED ONLY 50 MASH PER CHILD! FOOD PRICES HAVE RISEN! THE ALLOTMENTS HAVEN'T!

I... I'M SORRY, MR. CRITCHIT! I DIDN'T KNOW!



THE NEXT MORNING, I WENT TO SEE MR. CRITCHIT IN HIS OFFICE...

WELL, MISS DENNIS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHY WOULDN'T YOU HAVE BREAKFAST WITH THE CHILDREN?

BREAKFAST, YOU CALL IT? I REFUSED WHEN I TASTED IT! IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN FEED THEM, MR. CRITCHIT?



AND SO, BESIDES THE OTHER DUTIES I HAD, I VOLUNTEERED TO BUY AND SUPERVISE THE PREPARATION OF THE FOOD FOR THE CHILDREN FROM THE MEAGER AMOUNT MR. CRITCHIT GAVE ME EACH WEEK.

THAT WILL BE SIXTEEN DOLLARS, PLEASE!

OH, DEAR! THAT'S TOO MUCH! I ONLY HAVE TWELVE! WHAT HERE? HERE'S FORTY MORE!



I PAID THE EXTRA MONEY FROM MY OWN POCKET! I COULDN'T HELP IT! THE GAUNT FACES OF THE CHILDREN PLAGUED MY MIND! I DIDN'T TELL MR. CRITCHIT ABOUT IT! SO SUMMER PASSED AND AUTUMN DREW NEAR, THEIR LITTLE BODIES BEGAN TO FALL OUT! THEN, ONE DAY...

YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, SIR?

BAD NEWS, MISS DENNIS! THE ALLOTMENTS HAVE BEEN CUT!



BUT... BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE, MR. CRITCHIT! THE CHILDREN THEMSELVES HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT NOW!

I'M AWARE OF THAT, MISS DENNIS! AND YOUR WISE SHOPPING AND CAREFUL SUPERVISION HAVE DONE WONDERS! BUT THAT'S THE SITUATION! I'M SORRY!



BESIDE THE FOOD PROBLEM, ANOTHER CHALLENGE BECAME INTOLERABLE FOR MRS. THE CHILDREN'S CLOTHES? THEIR GARMENTS WERE ALL-FITTING AND HANGED? I'D PATCHED AND REPATCHED THEM...



DR. TOMMY! ANOTHER TORN PAIR OF PANTS?

... I'M SORRY, MISS DENNIS. I COULDN'T HELP IT! I JUST SEW OVER... AND... SOB... AND...

MR. CRITCHIT GAVE ME VERY LITTLE FOR CLOTHES TOO... FAR TOO LITTLE TO BUY WHAT WAS NEEDED! ON MY DAYS OFF, I FOUND MYSELF PUSHING COORRELLS...



I'M FROM BRIMWOOD BRIMAN AYLIM! I WONDER IF YOU MIGHT HAVE SOME OLD CLOTHES YOUR CHILDREN HAVE OUT-GROWN?

SORRY, LADY! THAT'S AN OLD RACKET!

AS FAR AS THE SANITARY CONDITIONS AT THE HOME WERE CONCERNED, I SOLVED THAT PROBLEM HAPPILY! THE CHILDREN WERE EASILY RECRUITED INTO BUCKET AND MO! BRIDES AND WE RENDERED BRIMWOOD S-LESS...



YOU'VE DONE ADMIRABLE, MISS DENNIS!

I DO MY BEST, MR. CRITCHIT!

BY SEPTEMBER, I'D ALREADY SPENT MY SALARY ON SUPPLEMENTING THE CHILDREN'S FOOD, CLOTHING, AND EDUCATION ALLOWANCES! BUT I DIDN'T MIND! IT'S SPORN SO FORD OF THEM!



YOU'RE WONDERFUL, MISS DENNIS!

PLEASE! WE'RE SO LUCKY TO HAVE YOU!

AND THEN OCTOBER ROLLED AROUND! THE NIGHTS BECAME CILLY, BUT MR. CRITCHIT SUPPLIED NO HEAT! I COMPLAINED...



WE'VE GOT TO CONSIDER OUR FUEL TILL WE REALLY NEED IT, MISS DENNIS!

I SUPPOSE YOU'VE HEARD MR. CRITCHIT!

TOWARD THE END OF OCTOBER, MY HUSBAND'S SALARY RAN OUT AGAIN! THE CHILDREN BEGAN TO DRIP WENTLE RITS? HALLOWEEN WAS COMING...



DO YOU THINK MR. CRITCHIT WOULD LET US CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN, MISS DENNIS?

I DON'T KNOW, MISS DENNIS!

I JUST ONE PUMPKIN, WITH A CAROLE IN IT! IT'D BE SO MUCH FUN!

BUT WHEN I APPROACHED MR. CRITCHIT ABOUT THE PUMPKIN, HE SHOOK HIS HEAD...



NO! I'M SORRY, MISS DENNIS! WE HAVE NO MONEY TO THROW AWAY ON TRIVIALITIES LIKE PUMPKINS!

BUT IT WOULD MAKE THE CHILDREN SO HAPPY, MR. CRITCHIT!

ALL OF MY ANGER AND RESENTMENT SPILLED OVER AS I SCREAMED AT HIM...ACCUSED HIM.

NOW THAT YOU KNOW, MISS DEWINE, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?



I'M GOING TO REPORT YOU TO THE AUTHORITIES!

HE CAME AT ME...HIS FLESHY HANDS REACHING OUT...

I...I DON'T THINK SO, MISS DEWINE! I DON'T THINK SO AT ALL!

KEEP AWAY FROM ME, YOU...FOUL...



HIS HANDS CLOSED ABOUT MY THROAT! THINGS BEGAN TO SPIN! THE SHRIILL ORIES OF CHILDREN FILLED THE ROOM AS I PASSED OUT.

HALLOWEEN! BEWARE! HALLOWEEN!



I CAME TO WITH SHRIERS OF DELIGHT ECHOING IN MY POURING BRAIN! I SAT UP! I WAS ON THE FLOOR OF MR. CRITCHIE'S OFFICE! A SEARING PAIN ENGORGED MY THROAT WHERE HIS FAT FINGERS HAD DULIN...



MR. CRITCHIE? HE...HE'S NOT HERE!

I STUMBLER TO THE DOOR AND FLUNG IT OPEN! THE CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER AND SCREELS OF JOY WAFTED DOWN THE CORRIDOR TOWARD ME! ONE OF THEM DASHED BY, GIGGLING. HER TIRTY, HAPPY FACE GLOOMED WITH BERRY GORE.



DON'T WORRY, MARY! YOU'LL HAVE YOUR PUMPKIN YET! I'M COMING TO.

A BREEZE LIGHT GREPT AROUND THE CORNER OF THE CORRIDOR! I COULD HEAR THE STAMMING OF TRY FEET COMING TOWARD ME! MARY LOOKED UP AT ME WITH BRIGHT SHIRING EYES.

OH, THAT'S ALL THAT, MISS DEWINE! WE'VE GOT OUR PUMPKIN...NOW! WE MADE IT OURSELVES!



OH?

THEY TURNED THE CORNER...TRAMPING TOWARD ME! THE GRINNING PUMPKIN'S EYES FLICKERED FROM THE GARDLE LIT INSIDE! BUT AS THEY NEARED, A COLD KNIFE OF HORROR SLIDED DEEP INTO MY CHEST! YES, THE CHILDREN HAD THEIR PUMPKIN! MR. CRITCHIE'S HALLOWED HEAD LEERED UP AT ME...IT'S EYES AND NOSE CUT AWAY TO PERMIT THE LIGHT TO SHINE THROUGH...



GOOD LORD!

THE END